

## **Duality: Triumph**

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael –April 20 2025

Easter Sunday

**Readings:** Acts 10:34-43; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26; John 20:1-18 NRSVUE

**Reflection:** Psalm 118

**Call to Worship:** Look, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15)

**Prayer:** Everlasting God, through Jesus Christ you overcame death and opened to us the door of eternal life. You have felt our pain and our sorrow and seen fit to give us hope. Renew and refresh us in your Holy Spirit as we celebrate the miracle of the empty tomb. Let us celebrate the joy that we find in your steadfast love and faithfulness. Let the light of our Lord's resurrection lift our hearts on this day. Guide us and lead us in worship this day so that we may praise your name. Lift up our hearts that we may sing of your miraculous salvation. May your love bless us this day so that we may love one another more deeply. Help us to celebrate the empty tomb as a sign of your great love for us. May we be freed from slavery to sin and death and arise into a life of righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 118

*<sup>15</sup> There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly; <sup>16</sup> the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." <sup>17</sup> I shall not die, but I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord. <sup>18</sup> The Lord has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death. <sup>19</sup> Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. <sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. <sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. <sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. <sup>23</sup> This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. <sup>24</sup> This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:15-24 NRSVUE\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 118 and we hear of God's salvation. That the stone that the builders have rejected has become the cornerstone. That the love of God overcomes all obstacles. That we triumph over adversity when we walk with God. That we conquer even death when we walk in the path of Jesus Christ. How do you prepare for both good and bad? Do you center yourself in prayer to face all things? How will you continue to trust Christ in all situations? How can you prepare yourself and others to be ready for all things with Christ?

**Prayer:** O God, our light, our beauty, our rest: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your new creation. Form us into your people and order our lives in you. We thank you for all you have already done and the great love that has been shown to us. We lift up our joys and our concerns, bringing all things before you. We share with you the worries

that we have spoken aloud. We share the celebrations that we have shared together. Help us to also share the silent pleadings from within. May we experience your grace in our laughter and our tears. May you strengthen us in sorrow and in rejoicing, knowing you are with us. Bring us to triumph as we overcome all tragedy with you. And may you guide us in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 10, verse 34 through 43.

*<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*  
(Acts 10:34-43 NRSVUE\*)

Our next reading is from 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 19 through 26.

*<sup>19</sup> If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. <sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. <sup>21</sup> For since death came through a human, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human, <sup>22</sup> for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. <sup>23</sup> But each in its own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*  
(1 Corinthians 15:19-26 NRSVUE\*)

Our final reading is from John chapter 20, verse 1 through 18.

*<sup>20</sup> Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." <sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent down to*

*look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the cloth that had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed, <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned to their homes.*

*<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, <sup>12</sup> and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and she told them that he had said these things to her. (John 20:1-18 NRSVUE\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We celebrate Easter as a triumph over the forces of evil. A triumph for all that is good. A triumph for all that is holy. A triumph for all people and a triumph for us personally. It is the reminder that love has conquered sin and death and given us life everlasting. The reminder that not even death is the end of our story, because our story always has the hope of life. We look at triumph today as it is a triumph that spawns from tragedy. It transforms the sorrow of the cross into the joy of the empty tomb. It transforms the lives of sinners that they may be forgiven, washed clean of their sins, and renewed in Christ. Because Easter is all about turning tragedy into triumph, because it is about succeeding where we are not expected to succeed. It is about finding goodness where we do not expect good. It is about finding hope where we do not expect to find hope.

It is about discovering Jesus. And it is the story that we tell and the story we hear in Acts. When Peter talks about the message of Christ, he talks about how the message spreads. How Jesus went and spread good news to the oppressed. How he healed those in need. How Peter and the other disciples were witnesses to all of these things. Peter testifies about how Jesus was put to death. That Rome crucified him with the desire that it would kill the hope that he brought. That God proved them wrong in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That he appeared to the disciples, giving them the order to go and share the good news. That Peter recounts this as the story of Christ because it is his story. Because it has transformed his life, and that triumph has become his. That Christ's resurrection from the dead is a way of healing. Like Paul says, if all were dead because of the sin of Adam, all are made alive in the resurrection of Christ. That we are raised up as Christ destroys death, giving us the resurrection. Giving us hope.

It's a hope that we hear in our gospel account. And Mary takes a starring role. She finds the stone has been moved, and she goes to Peter and John. They race to the tomb, and they're baffled, and they leave. They leave with simply confusion, with an unknown. Mary stays behind. Mary remains behind because to her, this is a continuation of her tragedy. Her teacher and her friend was crucified, dead, and laid to rest in this tomb. When she comes to help make sure that he is laid to rest, he is gone. The others show up and don't understand, so they leave. And it is Mary alone that remains behind to weep. And it's as she's weeping that she sees two angels who want to know why she's weeping. Trying to grasp why she is still sad, because she has not grasped what has happened. She tells them that she is sad because they have taken her Lord. Then it's Jesus that asks her why she's weeping. She doesn't realize it's him, and she asks just for his body, and she will take care of it. But when Jesus says her name, she knows who it is. She knows it is her teacher and friend. It is her Savior. And Mary goes to share the gospel message.

We can read what she says and it's just five words. Honestly, I feel like, for Mary, this sums up the gospel message. "I have seen the Lord." Because it really does say everything, doesn't it? She has seen him. He is not dead. He is risen. She has seen him. This tragedy is no longer a tragedy. She has seen him. He lives, though he was dead. She has seen him. He has been resurrected. She has seen him. And there is hope. I think of the hope, the amazement that she must have had. That she went expecting to maybe start getting closure after a very traumatic event. Wanting to do something good for Jesus. That though he is dead, she wants to lay him to rest. She wants to prepare him for a proper burial. One might say to give him his final peace. But when she does, she is surprised by hope. And I think about her message. That she goes and proclaims the living Christ to the disciples. "I have seen the Lord."

I think a lot about her testimony during Easter, because I think that her story itself helps us to understand fully the story of Easter. Because it is about rediscovering hope and understanding the depths of love. Because it is understanding Christ's great love for us that helps us to grow in faith. It is understanding all of the suffering and the hurt that Christ went through, so that we would understand what true love is. That we would grasp God's love and accept that salvation for ourselves. It is the reminder that the light overcomes the darkness. That we triumph over evil, because good will always rise. And I think about the way that we support each other. The way that we bear witness to Christ in our lives. The way that we may proclaim, "I have seen the Lord." Because I see him every time that I see somebody selflessly helping another. I see him when I see someone give to those who are in need. I see him when I see someone stand up for someone who is being hurt. I see the Lord when I see others forget themselves because they are so busy loving another. I see the Lord whenever I see his will being done. I see him when we speak up for the least and the last, in the name of God's great love. And it gives me hope. Let us too proclaim the triumph of the resurrection, as we too join Mary in her excited words, "I have seen the Lord." So, it is with love and hope on this day that I declare, Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and

lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Our Current Series – Duality**

This series is a special 2-part series and in it we will looking at the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. We will explore the duality of these Sundays. We will look at the celebration as Jesus entered Jerusalem that becomes the tragedy of his death on a cross on Palm Sunday. We then turn to the triumph of the resurrection on Easter Sunday. Through this duality, we explore the depth of love Christ has for us all.

4/13: Tragedy      4/20: Triumph

Pastor Cam will be on vacation from April 23<sup>rd</sup> through the 29<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Neoga Grace UMC**

752 Walnut  
PO Box 610  
Neoga, IL 62447  
(217)895-2809  
Worship 10:30am

#### **Toledo UMC**

Madison & Ohio St  
PO Box 267  
Toledo, IL 62468  
Worship 8:15am

#### **Etna UMC**

2799 Etna Rd  
Mattoon, IL 61938  
Worship 9:30am

Rev Camron D St.Michael  
<https://stmichael.pw>  
[cdstmichael@outlook.com](mailto:cdstmichael@outlook.com)  
(316)530-3182 (call or text)  
PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

\* Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

+ Scripture quotations are from the Common English Bible, Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible.